DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 074 899 HE 003 864

TITLE	Roger Williams College University Without Walls Urban Studies Center.
INSTITUTION	Roger Williams Coll., Bristol, R.I.
PUB DATE	Oct 72
NOTE	7p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	City Problems; *Educational Innovation; *External Degree Programs; *Higher Education; Student Developed Materials; *Urban Education; *Urban Studies

ABSTRACT

Roger Williams College is one of 20 colleges and universities engaged in a new cooperative educational venture that offers an alternative approach to obtaining a college degree. The program, called the University Without Walls (UWW), is designed to provide mature students with new learning opportunities in higher education outside of the traditional educational mainstream. One of the proposed offerings at Roger Williams is an Urban Studies Program that will attempt to integrate classroom work with field experiences and research assistantships. The structure of the Urban Studies Program will differ from the main body in that the organizational focus will revolve around a small cluster of faculty and students who will design and develop the curriculum. The staff of the UWW believes that the Urban Studies Program, built upon the student-facilitator cluster, will be a positive addition to the organization and philosophy of the open university. (Author/HS)

ED 074899

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ROGER WILLIAMS COLLEGE

University Without Walls

URBAN STUDIES ~~PROGRAM~~ center

Roger Williams College is one of twenty colleges and universities engaged in a new cooperative educational venture that offers an alternative approach to obtaining a college degree. The program, called the University Without Walls, was initiated at the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities and was funded by planning grants from the Office of Education, the Ford Foundation and UNESCO. Other participating institutions include the following: Antioch College, Bard College, Chicago State University, Friends World College, Goddard College, Howard University, Loretto Heights College. University of Massachusetts, New College at Sarasota, New York University, Skidmore College, Shaw University, University of South Carolina, Stephens College, Westminster College, University of Minnesota, Morgan State College, Northeastern Illinois State University and Staten Island Community College.

At Roger Williams College, the UWW program is designed to provide mature students with new learning opportunities in higher education outside of the traditional educational mainstream. Some of its unique features are listed below:

--Abandoning the sharply defined campus in favor of community settings which include a wide variety of locales, from on-the-job training to independent study within a correctional facility

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--Recognizing that age should not be a deterrent to further education but rather viewing education as a life-long pursuit

--Changing the focus of the learning experience away from a standard curriculum within a traditional classroom setting to one that places the student at the nucleus of the learning process

--Enlarging the faculty to include knowledgeable people from outside the academic world

--Making use of various teaching techniques in the storage, retrieval and communication of information

--Emphasizing active student participation

--Recognizing that the UWW students must be capable of carrying out academic activities without prodding by others, in order that they fulfill their own educational objectives.

DEVELOPMENT OF AN URBAN STUDIES PROGRAM

In order to maintain a program that can meet the needs of a varied student body, the core staff of the UWW, now housed in the metropolitan Providence area, is putting together a new educational "package." The umbrella under which these learning experiences can be grouped is called Urban Studies.

The Urban Studies Program, as in the overall UWW student centered curriculum, will attempt to integrate classroom work with field experiences and research assistantships. The structure will differ from the main body in that the organizational focus will revolve around a small cluster of faculty and students who will design and develop the curriculum. It is hoped that this process will bring about the union of

student experiences with a meaningful academic program.

The central purpose of creating the cluster experience within the UWW framework is an attempt to maximize the growth and learning potential of both students and facilitators. It is hoped that by bringing together motivated, mature students with knowledgeable learning facilitators, a dynamic interactive process will develop among all concerned. This process should emphasize the creation of a strong academic foundation upon which the students can build and incorporate their own personal experiences and insights.

The cluster format will provide a framework for academic accountability that is a key element to any formalized learning experience. The staff expects that the entire educational process will be a positive and successful one for everyone who accepts an active and responsible hand in its creation.

To implement this program, new staff have been added in the form of a community coordinator, an assistant coordinator, a counselor and three academic facilitators. The coordinator will be responsible for recruiting students and developing a liaison among local organizations, agencies and institutions of higher education. The role of the counselor will be to work with each student and the three academic facilitators in order to create individualized educational programs that meet the needs of each student and the academic rigors of the total Urban Studies Program. This will entail fostering a one-to-one student-counselor relationship and assisting in the development of a meaningful academic rapport between each student and his cadre of facilitators. The role of the three facilitators will be outlined in depth within the next few pages of this proposal.

Once a staff member of the UWW comes in contact with a student who appears interested in the Urban Studies Program, arrangements will be made for the student to meet with the counselor and the three facilitators. During these initial sessions and from that point on, if the student continues with the program, an open portfolio will be maintained on the student's needs, interests and academic progress. Each student will play the major role in the creation of his/her own transcript of work within the program.

The philosophy and organizational structure of the Urban Studies Program originated from the experiences that the UWW has had during its first six months in Providence. In developing a baccalaureate degree program in Urban Studies, the staff is convinced that certain program objectives must be fulfilled if the venture is to succeed. The foundations and basic operating assumptions of the Urban Studies curriculum are stated in the following paragraphs:

--To provide students with a working knowledge of Economics, Political Science, Sociology and Psychology

--To provide students with individualized counseling and teaching instruction to equip them for the rigors of a sound academic environment

--To assist students to develop an integrated, cohesive understanding of the learning process as it relates to dealing with complex issues facing the urban environment

--To help integrate field experiences with academic instruction

--To allow, via the cluster experience, an opportunity for shared intellectual growth among students and facilitators

--To integrate the local community as a laboratory field station into the mainstream of the academic curriculum.

For the Urban Studies Program to succeed, the students should demonstrate potential in the following areas:

--They should have the intellectual ability and personal dedication to succeed in a rigorous academic setting.

--They should bring with them maturity, motivation and enthusiasm; qualities that are considered the cornerstones of the UWW Urban Studies Program.

--They should have a wide range of experiences that will contribute depth and breadth to the entire program.

--They should be at a point in their professional career where a meaningful involvement with an urban studies program will make a positive contribution to their life situation.

In any academic setting that purports to offer individualized instruction and real personal concern for the student body, the type

and quality of the learning facilitators must be considered as a pivotal point in the success or failure of the venture. Therefore, the following requirements for the positions of academic facilitators are of paramount concern to the UWW staff as they begin the process of recruiting qualified individuals. Facilitators will be expected to fulfill the following requirements:

--Facilitators will be drawn into the Urban Studies Program in each of the following areas: Psychology, Counseling and Guidance; Economics and Mathematics; Sociology, Social Organization and Systems Analysis; and Political Science, Political Theory and Comparative Government.

--Each facilitator will have demonstrated a superior teaching ability in his area of study.

--Facilitators will have a knowledge and understanding of the students who will be availing themselves of the Urban Studies Program.

--Facilitators will have ready access to other professional and community resources that will assist and enrich the educational experiences of their students.

--Facilitators will share a concern and understanding of their students' problems and offer support where appropriate, i.e. time spent with them in counseling.

--Facilitators must be able to work with individuals from the local community.

--Facilitators must be able to work together in a systematic and ongoing process around program development.

--Facilitators will be expected to develop, in conjunction with the central administration, a means of evaluating the various educational experiences of their students. This will entail the use of educational objectives and regular systematic review of program development and student progress.

The staff of the UWW believes that the Urban Studies Program, built upon the student-facilitator cluster, will be a positive addition to the organization and philosophy of the open university.

October, 1972